

Selections from the writings of George Padmore, 1903 - 1959

1. The Profintern (1931)
2. Blue-Print of Post-War Anglo-American Imperialism (1935)

1. **George Padmore**, 1931, The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers, PART 4, Section 6, Revolutionary Perspectives

I. The Role of the R.I.L.U. in the Struggles of the Negro Toilers

The Red International of Labour Unions (Profintern) celebrated its Tenth Anniversary in 1930. Having been organised in the very heat of the acute post-war economic and political crisis in the most important European countries, the Profintern came to be the militant revolutionary headquarters of the world trade union movement, rallying to its banner all the class-conscious proletarian elements of the whole world.

Today the Profintern is in the thick of its struggle for winning over the working class. In spite of its fine successes in extending its influence the Profintern cannot yet say that it embraces the majority of the working class. The Profintern is still obliged to wage a relentless struggle for freeing the workers from the influence of the bourgeoisie, the reformists and anarcho-syndicalists. The greatest enemy of the Profintern in the struggle for influence over the working class is the International Trade Union Federation, the so-called Amsterdam International.

The Amsterdam International was organised one year prior to the Profintern. In spite of its high-sounding name of "International Federation," Amsterdam is, in the main, an association of European trade unions, owing to the fact that out of the 28 organisations affiliating with it 23 are in Europe and only 5 organisations are non-European. Besides, the Amsterdam International is a white chauvinist international. The Amsterdamites reflect the interests of the upper strata of the working class in the imperialist countries, and look down upon the trade union movement of the colonial and coloured peoples. Amsterdam's first and most important task is to preserve and reinforce capitalism and imperialism, and to strengthen the position of the bourgeoisie by suppressing the revolutionary movement in the imperialist countries and the national liberation movements in the colonies and semi-colonial countries.

The Profintern is the first real International of Trade Unions, because the workers of all nationalities and races, regardless of colour or creed, have rallied to its banner. The Profintern has its sections in practically all countries in the world, in the form of

independent trade unions and opposition groups and minorities inside the reformist trade unions. Besides these trade unions, which are organisationally connected with the Profintern, there are a whole number of trade union federations which adhere to the ideological leadership of the Profintern. Two very powerful organisations are among these – the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat and the Latin-American Confederation of Labour.

The Red International of Labour Unions is the first Trade Union International which furthered the development of the trade union movement among the colonial peoples, and succeeded in rallying a great part of them to its banner. It is the only international which conducts a consistent and permanent struggle against white chauvinism for equal rights for the labour movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, for the correct solution of the national-race problem. This struggle has only just begun. The problem of national equality has not been sufficiently appraised even by many of the Profintern supporters, while in the ranks of those sections of the working class which still follow the reformist and the reactionary leadership the “race struggle” in most cases, we regret to say, overshadows the class struggle. The Profintern has, however, mapped out a correct line for solving the national-race problem. It has indicated the path for waging the struggle against race chauvinism, against all colour bars, for uniting the workers of all races and nations.

A very vivid example of the national-race policy of the Profintern is its fight for strengthening and extending the trade union movement among the Negro workers. The Negro workers are the most exploited, the most oppressed in the world. It was the fate of the Negro workers to pay the horrible tribute to slavery, which served to destroy millions upon millions of black toilers. The Negro workers even now are actually slave-bound to their white conquerors. Different forms of forced labour, peonage, expropriation of their lands, extraordinary laws and unbearably heavy taxes, lynchings, segregation, etc., etc., are up till now the fate of the Negro toiling masses languishing under the yoke of imperialism. Tens of thousands of Negro workers are still groaning under the lash of their enslavers.

The Negro workers, however, exploited and oppressed by the imperialists, have not received the necessary support of the organised labour movement. The white worker, in many cases even today, still regards the Negro as a pariah, and scornfully refuses to stretch out a helping hand to his black brother. Even in the ranks of the revolutionary workers numerous examples of white chauvinism can be recorded. A long and bitter struggle has been waged by the Profintern against this psychology of “white superiority.” Day in and day out, year after year, the Profintern has raised the Negro problem before its affiliated sections in the U.S.A., South Africa, England, France, Belgium, Portugal, etc., sharply condemning any and all manifestations of

white chauvinism and underestimation of winning the black workers for the class struggle, pointing out the necessity of paying the most serious attention to the organisation of the Negro workers into revolutionary trade unions together with the white workers.

In order to strengthen and stimulate trade union activities among the Negro masses, the Profintern finally established a Negro Trade Union Committee composed of Negro workers from the United States, South, East, West and Equatorial Africa, the British and French West Indies and Latin America.

Since the establishment of the Committee, the Profintern has to some extent succeeded in overcoming white chauvinism in its ranks, and has corrected the mistakes of its American section, which formerly ignored work among the Negroes. The Profintern will continue its fight until it completely eradicates all traces of white chauvinism from its ranks and unites all workers – white black, yellow, brown – in one revolutionary trade union movement.

II. What Must Be Done?

In order to help the Profintern and its revolutionary trade union sections in the United States and South Africa to carry out the task of building up strong unions by strengthening the bonds of solidarity between the white and black workers, two things must be done.

(1) The class-conscious white workers must take the initiative of drawing the Negro workers into the revolutionary unions and the movement of the unemployed, guaranteeing to them every opportunity of actively participating in shaping the policies of the workers' organisations and leading the united front struggles of the working class against the offensive of the capitalists.

In this connection it is the special task of the revolutionary unions to bring the white workers into the struggle on behalf of the Negro demands. It must be borne in mind that the Negro masses will not be won for the revolutionary struggles until such time as the most conscious section of the white workers show, by action, that they are fighting with the Negroes against all racial discrimination and persecution. Every class-conscious worker must bear in mind that the age-long oppression of the colonial and weak nationalities by the imperialist powers has given rise to a feeling of bitterness among the masses of the enslaved countries, as well as a feeling of distrust toward the oppressing nation in general and toward the proletariat of those nations. This point was particularly emphasised in the resolution of the Communist International on the Negro Question in U.S.A.

It is absolutely necessary to pursue this policy. No retreat before white chauvinism must be tolerated, for only by deeds and not words will we be able to dispel the distrust which the more backward sections of the Negro toiling masses have towards the whites, a suspicion which has developed among them as a result of the traditional policy of the white reformist trade union leaders (Green, Mathew Woll, John L. Lewis, etc.). These A.F. of L. fakers not only refuse to organise the Negroes, but, when compelled to do so in order to safeguard the privileged position of the white labour aristocrats, invariably "Jim-Crow" the Negroes into separate unions and leave them at the mercy of the capitalists. Furthermore, the white workers must realise that in the present condition of world capitalism one of the aims of the imperialists is to find a way out of their difficulties by using the Negro workers, especially in the colonies, to worsen the already low standard of the white workers. Because of this the struggles of the Negro workers against the capitalist offensive must be made part and parcel of the common struggle against imperialism.

The emancipation of the white workers from the yoke of capitalism can only be achieved by making a decisive break with all reformist tendencies, which are the ideologies of the bourgeoisie within the ranks of the working class. They must come forward boldly in support of the programme of the Communist International and the R.I.L.U., which alone struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the liberation of the toiling masses of all races and colour. The workers of the imperialist countries must not forget the memorable words of Marx that "labour in the white skin cannot free itself while labour in the black is enslaved."

(2) The Negro workers must also take a more active part in the revolutionary struggles of the working class as a whole. They must make a decisive break with all bourgeois and petty-bourgeois reformist movements. They must not permit themselves to be misled by the "left" phrases of the American Negro petty-bourgeois reformists, such as Du Bois, Moton, Depriest, etc., etc., who are merely office-seekers and demagogues paid by the ruling class to befuddle the Negro masses in order to direct their attention away from revolutionary struggle into reformist channels.

The Negro workers must also conduct a more relentless struggle against the Negro trade union lackeys of the reformists, whose chief task is to betray the struggles of the Negroes on the economic front. This has been glaringly revealed both in the U.S.A. and in South Africa. For example, A. Phillip Randolph and his henchman, Frank Croswaith, "leaders" of the Pullman Porters' Union and members of the Socialist Party, are the most outstanding examples of Negro reformists. Some years ago the Pullman Porters' Union was the biggest mass organisation among Negro workers, but thanks to the opportunist policies pursued by Randolph and his

supporters the organisation is almost bankrupt. Today it is largely a dues-paying organisation and sick and death benefit society, completely under the domination of the bureaucrats of the A.F. of L., whose last act of betrayal of the Negro workers was openly to sabotage their struggles against the Pullman Company in 1928.

The same role of treachery has been played by the Negro reformists and other misleaders in the Union of South Africa. The natives must therefore conduct a sharper struggle against the tactics of Kadalie and Champion, as well as Ballinger, the British I.L.P. leader, who are the chief disrupters and splitters of the working-class movement among the blacks.

These agents of Amsterdam can boast of an unparalleled record of betrayals of the struggles of the natives of South Africa. The most recent example of Kadalie's hypocrisy was during the railroad strike in East London in 1930. After hundreds of native railroad workers downed tools and went out on strike Kadalie entered into a secret conference with the agents of the Government, who owned the railroads, and then appealed to the men to go back in order that they might get a few shillings to pay their dues from which Kadalie could secure his salary.

Again during the heroic struggles of the natives on Dingaan's Day (December 16th, 1930) Kadalie and Champion attempted to sabotage the demonstrations of the workers, who openly fought with the police for the right to protest against the vicious slave laws of the Hertzog's Government by burning their passes at monster mass meetings. Kadalie told the workers to be submissive and obey their oppressors. He promised to send a petition to Hertzog asking him to abolish the Pass laws, failing which he would call upon the workers to demonstrate in 1934. This shows the bankruptcy of Kadalie & Company.

The struggle against Garveyism represents one of the major tasks of the Negro toilers in America and the African and West Indian colonies.

Why must we struggle against Garveyism? As the "Programme of the Communist International" correctly states: "Garveyism is a dangerous ideology which bears not a single democratic trait, and which toys with the aristocratic attributes of a non-existent 'Negro kingdom'! It must be strongly resisted, for it is not a help but a hindrance to the mass Negro struggle for liberation against American imperialism."

Garvey is more than a dishonest demagogue who, taking advantage of the revolutionary wave of protest of the Negro toilers against imperialist oppression and exploitation, was able to crystallise a mass movement in America in the years immediately after the war. His dishonesty and fraudulent business schemes, such as the Black Star Line, through which he extorted millions and millions of dollars out of

the sweat of the Negro working class, soon led to his imprisonment. After his release Garvey was deported back to Jamaica, his native country. Isolated from the main body of the organisation, Garvey has been unable to maintain his former autocratic control over the movement, as a result of which there has been a complete disintegration of the organisation, which is now under the control of a number of warring factional leaders. Garvey, who was formerly in the service of American imperialism, has now switched his allegiance to the British, who are utilising him in order to keep the Negro toilers in the British colonies under submission. With this object in view the imperial Government has permitted Garvey to open his headquarters in London.

Despite the bankruptcy of the Garvey movement the ideology of Garveyism, which is the most reactionary expression in Negro bourgeois nationalism, still continues to exert some influence among certain sections of the Negro masses. The black landlords and capitalists who support Garveyism are merely trying to mobilise the Negro workers and peasants to support them in establishing a Negro Republic in Africa, where they would be able to set themselves up as the rulers in order to continue the exploitation of the toilers of their race, free from white imperialist competition. In its class content Garveyism is alien to the interests of the Negro toilers. Like Zionism and Gandhism, it is merely out to utilise racial and national consciousness for the purpose of promoting the class interests of the black bourgeoisie and landlords. In order to further their own aims, the leaders of Garveyism have attempted to utilise the same demagogic methods of appeal used by the leaders of Zionism. For example, they promise to “free” the black workers from all forms of oppression in reward for supporting the utopian programme of “Back to Africa,” behind which slogan Garvey attempts to conceal the truly imperialist aims of the Negro bourgeoisie.

The Negro workers must not be deceived by the demagogic gestures of Garvey and his supporters. They must realise that the only way in which they can win their freedom and emancipation is by organising their forces millions strong, and in alliance with the class-conscious white workers in the imperialist countries, as well as the oppressed masses of China, India, Latin America and other colonial and semi-colonial countries, deliver a final blow to world imperialism.

From: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/padmore/1931/negro-toilers/ch06.htm>

Blue-Print of Post-War Anglo-American Imperialism

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Transcribed: by Christian Hogsbjerg for Marxists.org 2007.

Confident of a United Nations' victory over the Axis, and with it the emergence intact of the British Empire (including the territories now under Japanese occupation), British imperialists are busy formulating plans for imperial reconstruction after the war. A number of official and unofficial committees have been set up to survey the economic, political and social problems of the various imperial territories, and to work out methods of consolidating and strengthening the bonds between the Dominions, India, the Colonies, Protectorates and other non-self-governing areas, and the British Crown.

Mr. Churchill has frankly stated that he has not assumed the responsibilities of the King's first Minister of State to preside over the liquidation of His Majesty's far-flung imperial dominions. Like all pro-consuls, he believes, as Earl Baldwin once declared, that "the British Empire is an instrument of Divine Providence for the promotion of the progress of Mankind."

In an analysis of British Imperialism one salient fact must always be kept in mind: that England without an Empire would be merely a geographical expression, an insignificant island of 46 million people off the fringe of Western Europe. England's world greatness is based upon her imperial structure, chiefly upon India, that brightest jewel in the Crown of the British Raj. For this reason, whatever concessions or modifications the post-war world may witness in colonial reconstruction, no British Government -Tory or Labour- will ever voluntarily relinquish Britain's hegemony over her sources of raw materials, markets and reservoirs of man-power. And this is all the more true as it becomes evident that America will emerge front this war the greatest imperialist nation of the twentieth century, and as such, Britain's chief commercial competitor for the markets of the world. Guided by this principle of self-interest, she is determined to preserve her status as a great world Power, come what may.

Before this war, Britain drew annual tribute amounting to £200 millions from her overseas investments, which returned to this country in the form of foodstuffs and raw materials. Today, with the loss of a number of her investment sources, British imperialists must cling more strongly than ever to the advantages which a Colonial Empire provides.

The covert struggle between Britain and America for imperial mastery is being pushed more and more into the open as the determination of the war is considered

to be approaching nearer. And this struggle is being voiced by prominent British and American capitalists. There is knowledgeable recognition that “a fundamental difference in psychology existed in Britain and America which would make team play between the two nations extremely difficult after the war.” This is the expressed opinion of no less a figure than the President of the American Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Erie Johnson, who imparted it to a press conference at Washington (on September 2), after a three weeks’ visit to Britain. Britain, Mr. Johnson went on to say, believed in controlled markets, the United States in free competition. It was not, he asserted, necessary to reconcile these two divergent views but it was necessary to recognise them.

Wendell Willkie also believes in free competition on the world’s markets, and particularly on the markets of those territories now forming parts of the British Empire. This is the underlying motive of his ostensibly democratic championship of freedom for colonial peoples, which he puts forward in his book, *One World*. Freed from the political control of their present British rulers, the native bourgeoisie would inevitably turn to America for the provision of capital, capital machinery, and all other instruments necessary for the development of industrial economy. For there is no doubt that with its greater industrial potential, most advanced technology and financial resources, America today occupies the same relationship towards world economy as Britain did during the last half of the nineteenth century, when she was the workshop of the world, and the City of London the greatest money market. Hence wider markets are an absolute necessity for U.S. capitalism, and as things stand, they can be secured only at the expense of the British Empire.

Capitalists in both countries recognise this most clearly, and that is why, as Mr. Eric Johnson stated, Britain believes in controlled markets, the U.S. in free competition. But while, as Mr. Johnson further maintained, it was not necessary to reconcile these two divergent views, there are sections, both within the British Empire and the U.S.A., which believe that they can be reconciled through some form of mutual co-operation. This will be expressed through a closer working agreement with America and the British Dominions in the exploitation of colonial territories, especially Africa.

The political blue-print of this new Anglo-American partnership was first expounded by General Smuts, the wily Boer statesman responsible for the imposture of the Mandates System. He comes forward once more as the strategist of the new Colonial Imperialism. “Condominium” will now supercede “mandates.” The cloak of altruism will once again screen imperialist self-interest.

Briefly, Smuts proposes to group the various British colonial regions according to their geographical position into federal units. For example, the Caribbean territories, including British Guiana and British Honduras, will be united into a kind of West Indian Federation under a joint Anglo-American Commission in which

Canada will participate. The West African colonies of the Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria, together with the adjoining French regions, will be brought into a West African Federation. Here again, America will have to be offered certain interests, because of the proximity of points like Dakar and Bathurst, Freetown and Liberia, to the South American countries (Brazil in particular). In East Africa, a similar group will comprise Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, British, French and Italian Somaliland, and parts of Abyssinia, under South African and British control. The native territories of Basutoland, Swaziland and Bechuanaland will be incorporated into the Union of South Africa: and the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland, with the Belgian Congo and the Portuguese territory of Mozambique, will be linked up to form a Greater South Africa. This would provide new lands for the increased white population which the South African Government intends to promote as a means of augmenting the present white minority population, to counter the vast black populations in these areas. They will also provide an internal market for the South African industries which have come into being since the outbreak of this war, and which will have to be turned over to peace-time manufactures in order to stave off unemployment and economic collapse.

A similar scheme is envisaged for the islands of the Pacific and the regions of East Asia. In that part of the world, England, America, Holland, Australia and New Zealand will operate as joint partners, while certain territorial concessions will be made to China, possibly at the expense of French Indo-China and Siam. Britain, however, still intends to retain Hong Kong and sole control of India and Burma.

This, in simplified outline, is the Tory blue-print of post-war Empire.

British imperial experts believe that such a form of joint administration between the English-speaking races will provide the basis of a lasting alliance between Britain and America, and will at the same time satisfy those American business circles which advocate the "Open Door" policy in British imperial territories, whereby they can have access to raw materials on the same terms as the British, and markets for their goods.

This new colonial "Regionalism" as it is being called, has the support of circles most closely interested. Practically all sections of European opinion in South Africa, for example are eager to benefit from some sort of international participation of this kind. They have only been divided as to who should participate. In the past, some have been for the participation of Germany, but General Smuts, representing the City of London, has for many years looked towards British interests to help promote South African mining economy, and he now welcomes the idea of American participation. He has been guided in this orientation by the fact that Germany was considered to have territorial and political aims in South Africa, and other parts of the Dark Continent, while America is not wishful of assuming the responsibilities of colonial administration, being quite willing to exert her imperialistic responsibilities

through the methods of dollar imperialism, which she has been using in South America, Cuba, Haiti, Liberia, and elsewhere.

Speaking to Reuter's Special Correspondent in Pretoria on August 27 last, General Smuts declared himself "all in favour of the Americans coming to Africa, and I support the idea of consultative councils on which America, as well as Britain and other interested countries, would be represented. America wants to trade and is opposed to imperialism or annexation."

In fact, Anglo-American capital is already well entrenched in the Union of South Africa. It holds the major interest in the Witwatersrand gold mining industry through the Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa, Ltd., which also has interests in the diamond mines, and in the copper development companies of Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo.

It is not unlikely that this co-operation of America in exploiting the natural resources of Africa and other parts of the British Empire will to a very great extent suit the interests of Yankee capitalism and British colonisers. There is to be a new dictionary of euphemisms. Just as "Regionalism" is to replace "mandates" so "partnership will oust "trusteeship."

The form of "partnership" envisaged will give the native peoples of Africa some wider representation on legislative councils, probably through the addition of one or more unofficial members. This will be done in order to placate progressive public opinion both in Britain and the colonies themselves, but there should be no shadow of doubt that the British imperialist will not give us real administrative control. The Governor will always be there to exercise his powers of determination and veto. Even where a wider democracy is permitted through the Constitution – Jamaica has been given universal suffrage – the ultimate result will be the same, as it is in Ceylon, which has the most advanced Constitution of all the British colonies. The Governor's veto, however, decides affairs in the final resort, and in most instances the wishes of the people come to nothing.

Lord Hailey, who has replaced Lord Lugard as the chief authority and spokesman on colonial affairs, addressing the Royal Central Asian Society on July 7, on "The Colonies and the Atlantic Charter," said that he was "one of those who join in believing that the opportunity should be taken of instituting Regional Councils for dealing with the dependencies, suitably grouped for this purpose. These bodies would endeavour by consultation and joint discussion to co-ordinate the economic and other policies of the dependencies and would review the progress made by them."

The personalities which would make up these Regional Councils are indicated in the choice of the Committee just appointed by the Colonial Secretary to advise "on

questions of economic policy in relation to the Colonial Dependencies, including particularly matters of general policy arising on programmes of economic policy.” The extremely reactionary and arch-imperialist Duke of Devonshire is the Committee’s chairman, and apart from one or two economists, the members include only representatives of the City of London. There is Sir William Goodenough, deputy chairman of Barclays Bank and also on the boards of the Commercial Union Assurance and the Mercantile and General Assurance; Sir William Howitt, director of Ashwell and Nesbit (Engineers), and of the Constantine Steamship Lines; Captain B.H. Peter, managing director of Westinghouse Brake and Signal; Sir John Hay, director of the Ocean Marine Insurance, the Mercantile Bank of India, and over twenty different rubber companies and other colonial undertakings. It is quite obvious where the interests of this Committee lie – certainly not with the colonial peoples. They are the self-same interests which have been and still are exploiting the colonial peoples.

In the new “Regional” plan, the Americans will supply the finances through investments, etc., while British interests will retain political and administrative control. In this way the satisfaction of the post-war colonial needs of Britain and America will be made to dovetail as far as possible under the exigencies which will arise as a result of America’s emergence from the war as the greatest capitalist Power. So long as Britain remained the dominant Power, she could dispense with any co-operation such as “Regionalism” anticipates; but imperialist crisis makes this form of co-operation necessary, while leaving political power in British hands. For retention of political control means retention of a certain amount of economic control.

The British Labour Party is also giving its endorsement to “Regionalism.” It has for a long time advocated placing colonies under international control, and is earnestly supporting the various educational and labour bodies which the Colonial Office is setting up, and which, while erecting a fine democratic front, are actually time-stalling machines. Despite its paper declarations, the Labour Party in practice differs very little from the Tories on the fundamental principle of Imperialism, and its collaboration in matters of imperial conduct is practically implicit.

Where Labour leaders differ with the out-and-out die-hard imperialists is on the question of the undisguised exploitation of the natural resources of the colonies with cheap native labour. Labour is in favour of a more widespread extension of social services, education, and the like. It is a humane colonialism, which envisages self-government of some of the colonies at a hazily distant future. It is all a very gradual process, to be accomplished by slow stages, and emerges out of the Labour Party’s general conception of Socialism as being the last stage of Capitalism. That is why it is able to adopt such confused resolutions as the following, which was accepted at the Labour Party’s recent conference:

“This conference expresses to the Colonial people its appreciation of their participation in the United Nations’ war effort; it declares that the terms of the Atlantic Charter and the ‘Four Freedoms’ should become active principles in Colonial administration and proclaimed in a special Charter to the Colonial peoples; it demands that all forms of political and economic imperialism shall be rapidly liquidated; it urges the abolition of ‘Colonial status’ and the rapid realisation of genuine partnership between this country and the Colonial peoples; it insists that the Government (in consultation with the Colonial peoples) shall press on with the social and economic welfare of their territories, including adequate education, health and nutrition services, and the attainment of political rights not less than those enjoyed or claimed by British democracy; it asks for the application of a Socialist policy in the economic organization of the Colonies, and the acceptance of the principle of international supervision and accountability in Colonial policy and administration.”

But how can there be a socialist policy in application to the Colonies when there is no socialist policy in Britain? And of what kind is the international supervision to be in present circumstances? Certainly only the “Regionalism” of General Smuts. So that, in the end, all protestations and resolutions of the Labour Party notwithstanding, its policy on Colonies and Imperialism is almost indistinguishable from that of the Conservatives.

In the final analysis, however, what the post-war world will bring to the British and other Colonial Empires depends to a large extent upon events in Europe, and these are now beginning to shape themselves.

From: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/padmore/1943/blue-print.htm>

Course: African Revolutionary Writing

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